

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L PORT AU PRINCE 0958

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV SOPH HA

SUBJ: LEADERSHIP CHANGE AT GOVERNMENT NEWSPAPER

REF: (A) PORT AU PRINCE 0902, (B) PORT AU PRINCE 864

1. SUMMARY: FOLLOWING THE MARCH 31 CABINET RESHUFFLE, THE GOVERNMENT-OWNED NEWSPAPER LE NOUVEAU MONDE HAS HAD A HOUSE CLEANING OF ITS TOP MANAGEMENT STAFF. TWO OF THE THREE APPOINTEES ENJOY WIDE RESPECT AS WORKING JOURNALISTS AND HAVE GOOD RELATIONS WITH THIS EMBASSY; NO CHANGE IN EDITORIAL POLICY IS FORESEEN. RUMORS OF FURTHER CHANGES AFFECTING DIPLOMATIC OR MILITARY PERSONNEL APPEAR TO HAVE SOME SUBSTANCE, IF UNUSUAL ACTIVITY AT GHQ IS ANY INDICATION. END SUMMARY.

2. AS A SEQUEL TO THE MAJOR MARCH 31 CABINET RESHUFFLE (REFTELS), THE GOH INFORMATION SECRETARY ANNOUNCED APR 6 THE FOLLOWING CHANGES IN THE TOP POSITIONS OF THE GOH-OWNED DAILY NEWSPAPER OF RECORD, LE NOUVEAU MONDE, WHOSE PRONOUNCEMENTS ARE QUASI-OFFICIAL:

DIRECTOR: ULRICK ST.-LOUIS, AGE 51 (VICE DR. RENE PIQUION).

ADMINISTRATOR: GERARD JOLIBOIS, AGE 57 (VICE ERIC D.

JEAN-JACQUES.)

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF: ROGER GAILLARD, AGE 53 (VICE GUY MEYER).

JOILBOIS, AT THE PAPER'S MANAGEING EDITOR, REVEALED IN HIS ACCEPTANCE SPEECH THAT DUVALIER TOLD HIM THAT HENCEFORTH LE NOUVEAU MONDE MUST BE SELF-FINANCING. INFORMATION

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SECRETARY GOUSE EMPHASIZED THAT THE PAPER'S MAIN DUTY WAS TO MAKE THE GOVERNMENT RESPECTED.

3. COMMENT: A) WE SEE NO POLICY IMPLICATIONS IN CHANGING THE PAPER'S MANAGEMENT, BUT WE WOULD EXPECT TO FIND A LESS TEDIOUS PAPER UNDER THE BRILLIANT GAILLARD.

B) ST.-LOUIS' RETURN TO OFFICIAL PROMINENCE, AFTER LOSING HIS SEAT IN THE 1973 LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS, IS A SURPRISE. HE HAD BEEN PRESIDENT OF THE UNICAMERAL NATIONAL ASSEMBLY SINCE ITS CREATION IN 1964. IN THE MEANTIME HE HAS PUBLISHED A WEEKLY NEWSPAPER CONVICTION, WHICH WAS DISTINTUISHED MAINLY BY ITS OLD GUARD DUVALIERIST VIEWS AND ITS FERVENT APPEALS FOR STRICT CONSTRAINTS ON LAND OWNERSHIP BY FOREIGNERS. PIQUION, A VETERAN STANDARD BEARER OF "NEGRITUDE" AND COHORT OF FRANCOIS DUVALIER, MIGHT HAVE BEEN ACCUSED OF LOSING TOUCH WITH RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN HAITI, BUT HIS LOYALTY WAS UNIMPEACHABLE, AND IT IS HARD TO SEE HOW ST.-LOUIS COULD OFFER MORE. DUVALIER HAS SWAPPED ONE OLD-TIMER WITH ANOTHER (PERHAPS THE PRICE FOR GETTING THE MEN HE WANTED IN THE TWO LESS SENIOR POSITIONS). ST.-LOUIS IN THE 1960'S WAS AMBIVALENT TOWARD THE US; OFTEN FRIENDLY, YET HE RAVED AGAINST ALLEGED US SUBVERSION IN THE 1963-64 AND 1968 INVASION CRISES. OVER THE PAST YEAR ST.-LOUIS HAS APPRECIATED THE ATTENTION SHOWN HIM BY THE EMBASSY FOLLOWING HIS PUBLIC COMPLAINTS THAT THE WEEKLY PRESS WAS BEING IGNORED BY ORGANIZERS OF PRESS CONFERENCES. ON BALANCE, WE ANTICIPATE GOOD PERSONAL RELATIONS WITH HIM.

C) THE SELECTION OF JOLIBOIS, ALREADY A RANKING STAFFER, AND GAILLARD, A REGULAR CONTRIBUTOR, BALANCED OFF RESPECTIVELY A MODERATE PRO-AMERICAN WITH A PROMINENT "OLD LEFT" FRANCO-PHILE. LAST YEAR JOLIBOIS WAS A HIGHLY SUCCESSFUL INTERNATIONAL VISITOR TO THE US, WHOSE SERIES OF ARTICLES BASED ON HIS TRAVELS WAS WELL DONE AND WILL RECEIVED. HE IS ONE OF THE MORE RESPONSIBLE JOURNALISTS IN HAITI.

D) GAILLARD IS WELL KNOWN AS A TALENTED PRO-FRENCH, SELF-STYLED MARXISTINTELLECTUAL WHOSE POLITICAL UNORTHODOXY SERVED DUVALIERIST PURPOSES IN THE EARLY 1960'S AND WHO HAS SINCE ESTABLISHED HIS NATIONALIST CREDENTIALS. HE HAS ESCHEWED POLITICS FOR HIS JOURNALISTI C, LITERARY AND HISTORICAL WRITING, A REALM IN WHICH HE EXCELS. HE HAS GOOD RELATIONS WITH EMBOFFS, AND HAS NO KNOWN ANTIPATHY

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TOWARD THE US. NEVERTHELESS, HE IS WORKING ON A HISTORY OF THE US OCCUPATION OF HAITI WHICH, WHEN PUBLISHED, CANNOT HELP BUT REVIVE SOME UNHAPPY MEMORIES FOR HAITIAN NATIONALISTS.

4. MORE TO COME? - THESE LATEST CHANGES INEVITABLY FUEL SPECULATION ABOUT OTHER POSSIBLE CHANGES TO COME, PERHAPS INVOLVING DIPLOMATIC OR MILITARY PERSONNEL. DUVALIER, LIKE HIS FATHER, HOLDS HIS CARDS CLOSE TO HIS CHEST, AND USES THEM TO MAXIMUM DRAMATIC EFFECT; NONE OF THE NEW OR OLD CABINET APPOINTEES, FOR EXAMPLE, WERE AWARE IN ADVANCE

OF THE MAR. 31 RESHUFFLE. THEY NEWSPAPER CHANGES WERE
SIMILARLY KEPT A SECRET UNTIL ANNOUNCED. ONE FACTOR FAVORIN
AT LEAST ONE DIPLOMATIC CHANGE IS THAT GEN. CLAUDE
RAYMOND'S DE FACTO RECALL AS AMBASSADOR TO SPAIN EVENTUALLY
MUST BE MADE OFFICIAL. WITHIN THE MILITARY REPORTEDLY A
NUMBER OF OLDER ARMY COLONELS FEAR THAT THEIR RETIREMENT MAY
BE IMMINENT. WE HAVE NOTED, MOREOVER, THAT COL. JEAN THOMAS,
EXECUTIVE OFFICER AT ARMED FORCES HQS., HAS BEEN CLOSETED WITH
DUVALIER FOR LONG SESSIONS OVER THE PAST WEEK, AND HAS IMPLIED
TO US THAT IMPORTANT DECISIONS IMPEND.
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